

THE EVIDENCE FOR SURVIVAL FROM SIR OLIVER LODGE'S *RAYMOND*

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ABSTRACT

Raymond, son of Sir Oliver Lodge, was killed in 1915. Sir Oliver claimed mediumistic evidence of Raymond's survival. This evidence is brought forward and evaluated in the light of modern parapsychological thinking. It is found to be in some places evidential of the paranormal, but ambiguous as regards survival.

The health and polity of the body are largely dependent on the activity of these phagocytes. They are to us extremely important; they are an essential part of our being.

But now suppose one of these corpuscles endowed with intelligence—what conception of the universe will it be able to form? It may examine its surroundings, discourse of the vessels through which it passes, of the adventures it encounters; and if philosophically minded, it may speculate on a being of which perhaps it and all its like form a part—an immanent deity, whose constituents they are, a being which includes them and includes all else which they know or can imagine—a being to whose existence they contribute, and whose purposes they serve or share. So far they could speculate, and so far they would be right. But if they proceeded further, and entered on negations, if they surmised that that immanent aspect of the universe in which they lived and moved and had their being was the sole and only aspect, if they surmised that there was no personality, no feeling, no locomotion, no mind, no purpose, apart from them and their kind, they would greatly err. What conception could they ever form of the manifold interests and activities of man? Still less of the universe known to man, of which he himself forms so trivial a portion.

[*Raymond*, 1918, p. 386]

The facts of the life of Sir Oliver Lodge are given succinctly in *Webster's Biographical Dictionary* (Merriam, 1980, p. 912):—

Lodge, Sir Oliver Joseph. 1851–1940. English physicist and author, b. Penkull, Staffordshire. Professor, University Coll., Liverpool (1881–1900); principal, U. of Birmingham (1900–19). Investigated lightning, electromagnetic waves; wireless telegraphy; named the coherer used in wireless telegraphy; conducted experiment to determine whether moving matter exerts a drag on the ether, obtaining a negative result; pursued psychical researches; published belief in possibility of communication between living and dead; attempted to reconcile science and religion. Writings include *Elementary Mechanics* (1877), *Modern Views of Electricity* (1889), *Life and Matter* (1905), *The Substance of Faith* (1907), *Man and the Universe* (1908), *The Ether of Space* (1909), *The Survival of Man* (1909), *Raymond, or Life and Death* (containing an account of his supposed communication with dead son Raymond; 1916), *Christopher, a Study in Human Personality* (1919), *Making of Man* (1924), *Atoms and Rays* (1924), *Relativity* (1925), *Evolution and Creation* (1927), *Why I Believe in Personal Immortality* (1928), *Beyond Physics* (1930), *Advancing Science* (1931), *Past Years* (autobiography; 1931) etc.

As part of these prolific accomplishments Lodge contributed letters and articles on psychical research to journals as diverse as *Nature* and the *Proceedings of the SPR* (e.g. Lodge, 1884a, 1884b, 1892, 1916). Today, perhaps

his most well-known contribution (as the biographical entry suggests) is his book *Raymond, or Life and Death* (1918), in which (and in an article, 1916) he claimed evidence for survival of his dead son. There is hardly any grief expressed, as befits a nineteenth-century upper-class Englishman, though one can surmise that it is as great as any losing of a son: "to lighten the blow — which it is permissible to say was a terribly severe one" (Lodge, 1916, p.124). No wonder he sought out mediums to establish the continuity of Raymond's personality.

It is the purpose of this article to bring forward this book's and this 1916 article's most evidential material in favor of the survival hypothesis and re-evaluate it in light of modern thinking.

Sir Oliver Lodge's son Raymond was born in 1889, and joined the army in September 1914. He died in the Great War on 14th September 1915. His death was conveyed to his family three days later.

Exhibit A The Faunus Message

Extracts from the script of that superlative sensitive Mrs Piper refer to the discarnate spirit of F. W. H. Myers, which says "you take the part of the poet, and he will act as Faunus", evidently referring to Lodge. Lodge wrote to the classicist medium Mrs Verall and others, asking her: "Does *The Poet and Faunus* mean anything to you? Did one 'protect' the other?" She replied immediately (September 8th, 1915), referring Lodge to Horace, Ode II. xvii. 27–30, and saying:—

The reference is to Horace's account of his narrow escape from death, from a falling tree, which he ascribes to the intervention of Faunus. [Lodge, 1916, p. 113]

Me truncus illapsus cerebro
Sustulerat, nisi *Faunus* ictum
Dextra levasset,¹ Mercurialium
Custos virorum.

... And once a falling tree
Was on the point of braining me
When Faunus, friend of poets, blocked the blow.

[Michie, 1964, p. 125]

'Faunus the guardian of poets' (poets being the usual interpretation of 'Mercury's men').

Says Lodge, rather hastily,

I perceived, therefore, from this manifestly correct interpretation of the "Myers" message to me, that the meaning was that some blow was going to fall, or was likely to fall, though I didn't know of what kind, and that Myers would intervene, apparently to protect me from it. So far as I can recollect my comparatively trivial thoughts on the subject, I believe that I had some vague idea that the catastrophe intended was perhaps of a financial rather than of a personal kind; though, as Mr. Piddington has now reminded me, a falling or fallen tree is a recognized symbol of death—the symbolism being perhaps derived from a misunderstanding of *Eccl.* xi. 3.²

Commentary: The alleged precognition (called by Lodge a prevision) could

¹ Warded off

² If the clouds are heavy with rain, they will discharge it upon the earth; whether a tree falls south or north, it must lie as it falls.

easily be on the part of Mrs Piper, rather than from the discarnate mind of Myers. We do not have any evidence that the death of Raymond was in any sense "lightened". The fact of writing a whole book about the case shows that it very much preoccupied Lodge's mind. In its favour, however, Myers would be expected to give a classical allusion, classics being his speciality. As far as Mrs Piper was concerned, "the message to which you refer is quite foreign to me. I have no recollection of ever having seen it or reading it in the *Proceedings*."

Exhibit B Sitzings with 'Raymond'

The very first sitting of this kind that was held after Raymond's death was held not explicitly for the purpose of getting into communication with him, still less with any remotest notion of finding out anything concerning Mr. Myers, but mainly because a French widow lady, who had been kind to our daughters during winters in Paris, was staying with my wife and was in terrible distress at the loss of both her beloved sons in the war, within a week of each other, so that she was left quite desolate. To comfort her my wife took her up to London to a sitting kindly arranged for September 24 [Raymond died 14th September] by Mrs Kennedy, who knew and recommended a certain medium, here called Mrs A.

[Lodge, 1916, p. 125]

[Nothing especially evidential]

On the afternoon of the same day, 27th September, 1915, that Lodge had his first meeting with Mrs A., Lady Lodge had her first sitting as a complete stranger with Mr Z., a professional medium, who had been invited for the purpose—without any name being given—to Mrs Kennedy's house at 3.30 p.m.

Lodge comments that here again [*sic*] Raymond was described with considerable accuracy fairly early in the sitting, and several identifying messages were given:—

Was he not associated with chemistry? If not, some one associated with him was, because I see all the things in the chemical laboratory.

That chemistry thing takes me away from him to a man in the flesh [O.J.L. presumably] and connected with him a man, a writer of poetry, on our side, closely connected with spiritualism. He was very clever—he too passed away out of England. [This is clearly meant for Myers.]

He has communicated several times. This gentleman who wrote poetry—I see the letter M—he is helping your son to communicate.

Commentary: if the facts of anonymity are correct, then this session points at the very least to clairvoyance or telepathy between the living.

Exhibit C The Group Photograph Incident

Extract from Lady Lodge's anonymous sitting with Mr Z. on September 27th, 1915:—

You have several portraits of this boy. Before he went away you had got a good portrait of him—two—no, three. Two where he is alone and one where he is in a group of other men. He is particular that I should tell you of this. In one you see his walking stick—(The control here put an imaginary stick under his arm.) [Lodge, 1916, p. 133]

The Lodges did not know of the existence of a photograph in which he was one of a group, and Lady Lodge "was sceptical about it, thinking that it might

be only a shot or guess on the part of the medium at something probable". (Lodge, 1916, p.133). Nothing more was heard on the subject for two months. On Monday, November 29th, however, a letter came from Mrs Cheves, a stranger to the Lodges, who had known Raymond, and wrote:—

My son, who is M.O. to the 2nd South Lincs., has sent us a group of officers taken in August, and I wondered whether you knew of this photo and had had a copy. If not may I send you one, as we have half a dozen and also a key? I hope you will forgive my writing to ask this, but I have often thought of you and felt so much for you in your great sorrow.

Before the photo came, Oliver Lodge was having a sitting with Mrs A. alone at her house on December 3rd, and asked carefully about the photograph, "wishing to get more detailed information about it before it was seen" (by the Lodges).

'Raymond' said he thought that there were more than one photo taken. He was sitting down, with some standing behind him in a row, perhaps a dozen in total. "He remembers that somebody wanted to lean on him, but he is not sure if he was taken with some one leaning on him." (Lodge, 1916, p.136). The photo was taken out of doors. The control shows Lodge at the back lines going down. It looked like a black background, with lines at the back of them. (The control here kept drawing vertical lines in the air.)



Figure 1. Group of officers, showing an arm resting on Raymond's shoulder.

The photograph did not arrive until December 7th. Raymond's diary entry had indicated that the photo was taken on August 24th. The exposure was made only 21 days before his death, and some days may have elapsed before he saw a print, if he ever saw one. He certainly never mentioned it in his letters, which were frequent enough.

Let me quote from Oliver Lodge (1916, p.138):—

Considered as a photograph of Raymond it is bad, but considered from the point of view of evidence it is good. For on examining the photograph, we found that every

particularity mentioned by Raymond [deceased], unaided by the medium, was strikingly correct.. The walking stick is there [how common were these in those days, I wonder—M.T.], but Z. had put a stick under his arm (which is not correct), and in connection with the back-ground Mrs A's control had, by gesture, emphasised vertical lines on the roof of the shed, but the horizontal lines in the back-ground generally are equally conspicuous.

Some of the group are sitting while others are standing behind. Raymond is one of the sitting, and his walking stick or regulation cane is lying across his feet.

But by far the most striking piece of evidence is the fact that some one sitting behind Raymond is leaning or resting a hand on his shoulder . . . It is the only case in the photograph where one man is leaning or resting his hand on the shoulder of another . . . [p. 139]

Comments Lodge (1916, p. 145):—

In most evidence there is some flaw. There may be one in this, but I have not yet discovered it. Our complete ignorance, even of the existence of the photograph, in the first place, and secondly the gradual manner in which the details normally came to our knowledge, so that we were able to make provision for getting the supernormally acquired details definitely noted beforehand, seem to me to make it a first class case. While as to the amount of coincidence between the description and the actual photograph, that surely is quite beyond chance or guesswork. For not only are many things right, but practically nothing is wrong.

Closing commentary: Oliver Lodge's final conclusion was that he had evidence of survival. He says (1916, p. 140) that the "elimination of ordinary telepathy from the living, except under the far-fetched hypothesis of the unconscious influence of complete strangers, was exceptionally complete." But in these days we regard no man as an island. The conclusion must be that, despite uncopious evidence and a welter of false starts, the material in Sir Oliver Lodge's *Raymond* does provide some suggestion of paranormal processes. Whether that be communication from the dead or super-ESP amongst the living must remain the hopefully not eternal question. That it may be super-ESP is suggested by the Honolulu episode:—

Lionel and Norah, going through London on the way to Eastbourne, on Friday, 26 May 1916, arranged to have a sitting with [the medium] Mrs Leonard about noon. They held one from 11.55 to 1.30 . . .

At noon it seemed suddenly to have occurred to [Raymond's brother] Alec in Birmingham to try for a correspondence test; so he motored up from his office, extracted some sisters from the Lady Mayoress's Depot, where they were making surgical bandages, and took them to Mariemont for a brief table sitting. It lasted about ten minutes, between 12.10 and 12.20 p.m. And the test which he then and there suggested was to ask Raymond to get [the control] Feda in London to say the word "Honolulu". This task, I am told, was vigorously accepted and acquiesced in . . . Norah and Lionel knew nothing of this. [Lodge, 1918, p. 271]

This is the transcript of the relevant portion of the sitting:—

Feda: (to Norah)—You could play.

Norah: Play what?

Feda: Not a game, a music.

Norma: I am afraid I can't, Raymond.

(*Feda, sotto voce*—She can't do that.)

He [i.e. Raymond] wanted to know whether you could play Hulu—Honolulu.

Whether this comes from communication with Raymond, or from super-ESP, must remain unsettled. But that it is ESP of a sorts seems certain.

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AN OPEN CRITICISM OF THE MATERIALIST ATTITUDE

by F. SOMERVILLE ROBERTS

ABSTRACT

An assessment is made of the nature of sceptical attacks being made against parapsychology at the present time and a means of refuting them is suggested. The advantages to psychical research of such a step are discussed. The term 'paranormal' is used within the Society's definition.

There is no doubt that the sceptical approach to the paranormal is becoming more strident and hostile than in the earlier years of parapsychology. Whether or not this is due to the strengthening position of parapsychology, with evidence for its veracity constantly increasing as a result of experimental work or observation, there is no doubt that sceptical opinion is becoming almost desperate in its hostility. In many quarters, scepticism is becoming emotional and abusive, which are certainly not characteristic of a scientific approach.

This attitude has been well illustrated by Playfair in his paper "Mediawatch" in the April issue of the *Paranormal Review*. For example, he quotes Professor Richard Dawkins as being most aggressive in saying that "The paranormal is bunk and those who try to sell it to us are fakes and charlatans" and going on to say that demonstrations of psi on television are